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ABSTRACT

This is a report on the 2001 survey results of community college presidents, administered by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). The AACC utilized the George B. Vaughan Career and Lifestyle Survey (CLS) to gather information on these community college leaders. The study surveyed 936 presidents of public American community colleges and/or chancellors of multi-college districts who were members of the AACC. The study excluded interim presidents and presidents who had served less than one year. A total of 661 (71%) presidents responded to the survey. Results showed that: (1) the percentage of female presidents increased from 11% in 1991 to 28% in 2001; (2) 50% of the presidents had mentors; (3) 86% of the presidents were white; (4) the average age for the presidents was 56 years; and (5) 88% of the presidents held a Ph.D. or Ed.D. The report also states that 60% of the presidents had over five years experience. Internal college activities like administrative tasks and meetings were reported as being the most time consuming part of presidential duties. Community service, fundraising, business/industry contacts, legislative actions, professional conferences, and teaching were other important presidential duties discussed. (MKF)

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AACC-RB-02-1

RESEARCH BRIEF

No. 3
Leadership
Series

The Community College Presidency 2001

By Iris M. Weisman and Georgè B. Vaughan

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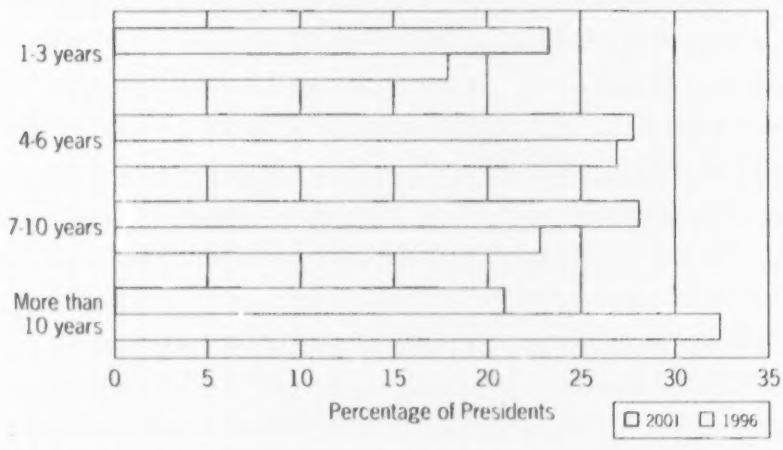
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research brief presents results of a 2001 study of community college presidents using George B. Vaughan's Career and Lifestyle Survey (CLS). The CLS was previously conducted in 1984, 1991, and 1996 (Vaughan 1986; Vaughan, Mellander, and Blois 1994; Vaughan and Weisman 1998). Three particularly striking findings result from a comparison of data from 2001 and previous surveys: a near-threefold increase in the percentage of female presidents, the lack of a sizable increase in the percentage of minority presidents, and an increased rate of presidential retirements.

Highlights of survey results:

- The percentage of community college presidents who were female increased from nearly 11 percent in 1991 to 28 percent in 2001. Over the same 10-year period, little change occurred in representation by members of racial or ethnic minorities.
- 50 percent of presidents said they had a mentor.
- 79 percent of responding presidents said they planned to retire within 10 years (Figure 1).
- 95 percent of responding presidents served on the board of a community-based or nonprofit organization.
- 84 percent of presidents performed community service in 2001.
- 52 percent of presidents spoke with state representatives more than 10 times per year.
- Presidents met with business officials more frequently than they met with local school officials.

FIGURE 1 Time Frame in Which Presidents Planned to Retire: 1996 and 2001



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This research brief has two parts: a profile of the presidents, including demographic characteristics, educational background, professional background, and lifestyle; and a profile of the presidency, including professional activities, community and business relations, and employment conditions.

Profile of the Presidents

- Demographic Characteristics
- Educational Background
- Professional Background
- Lifestyle

Profile of the Presidency

- Professional Activities
- Community and Business Relations
- Employment Conditions

Methodology

This research brief presents selected results of the 2001 Community College Presidents: Career and Lifestyle Survey. The survey builds upon the Career and Lifestyle Surveys (CLS) administered in 1984, 1991, and 1996. The CLS is used to collect information on demographic characteristics of community college presidents, these officials' pathways to the presidency, and selected factors concerning the position of community college president. This research brief focuses on presidents who were serving in 2001 and contains new information on their professional activities, as well as their interactions with community, business, and government leaders.

The study population consisted of the 936 presidents of public U.S. community colleges that belong to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC membership represents 95 percent of U.S. community colleges). The report includes responses from presidents of public community colleges and presidents or chancellors of multicollege districts and of state community college systems only. The researchers excluded campus chief executive officers (CEO), provosts, and officials with similar titles. Interim or acting presidents were excluded only if they met three conditions: (1) they identified themselves as serving in an interim position; (2) they had been in their current position less than one year; and (3) the current interim presidency was their first presidency.

The initial mailing went out in June 2001, and a follow-up letter was sent in July 2001. A total of 661 presidents completed and returned the survey by August 15, 2001, providing a response rate of approximately 71 percent. The data include the responses of presidents from 48 states.

Because the number of valid responses varied by question, data are reported in valid percentages. In other words, the phrase "of those presidents who responded to this question" is implied whenever findings are discussed. Only where total responses were significantly less than 661 is the number of responses to a question provided. Percentages have been rounded to whole numbers unless a decimal place was needed to highlight subtle differences.

Three other CLS studies provide data for this report: the 1984 study by Vaughan; the 1991 study by Vaughan, Mellander, and Blois; and the 1996 study by Vaughan and Weisman. Statistics from these studies that appear in this report are derived from unpublished data gathered in the course of the studies. The authors refer to these statistics only by the year of the relevant study (i.e., 1984, 1991, or 1996). Readers interested in learning more about these studies should consult the list of published works at the end of this document.[1]

[1] The combined results of the four CLS surveys do not represent a longitudinal study of specific presidents throughout their careers. Rather, each study represents a snapshot in time of the community college presidency in general. Although readers may infer certain trends in presidential characteristics from these studies, anyone reading this document should exercise care in drawing conclusions or making predictions, particularly about individual community college presidents who were surveyed.

Profile of the Presidents

Demographic Characteristics: Gender, Race or Ethnicity, and Age

One of the most important findings of the study is the increase in the percentage of female community college presidents. Between 1991 and 2001, representation of women increased from approximately one-tenth to more than one-quarter of the presidents (Figure 2).

Survey respondents identified their race or ethnicity by selecting from six categories: White/Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, American Indian/Native American, Asian American/Pacific Islander, and Other. Respondents who identified themselves as White/Caucasian retained the largest percentage of presidencies, down from slightly more than 89 percent in 1991 to nearly 86 percent in 2001. Because presidents who identified themselves as White/Caucasian retained such an overwhelming majority, there was little change in the percentage of presidents from other racial or ethnic groups. Distribution of the 2001 community college presidents by race or ethnicity is depicted in Figure 3.

The average age of community college presidents in 2001 was 56 years. Respondents ranged from 36 to 78 years of age. Presidents, on average, were slightly older than they were in 1996, when the average age was 54.

FIGURE 2 **Distribution of Presidents by Gender: 1991-2001**

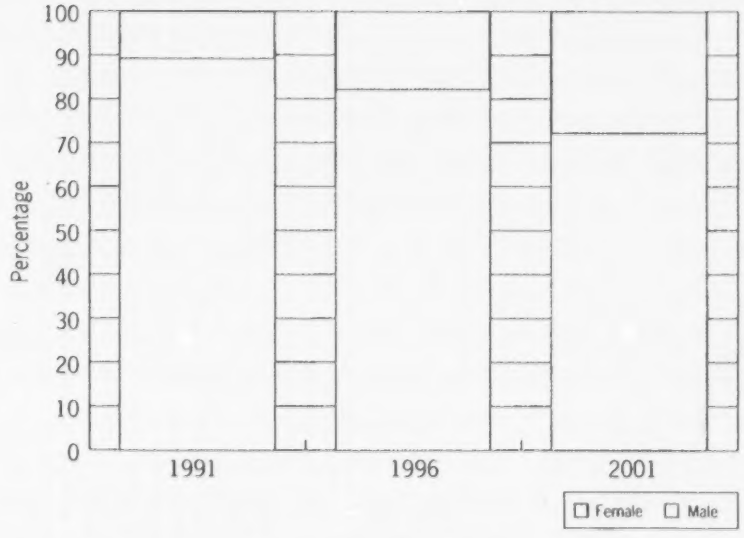
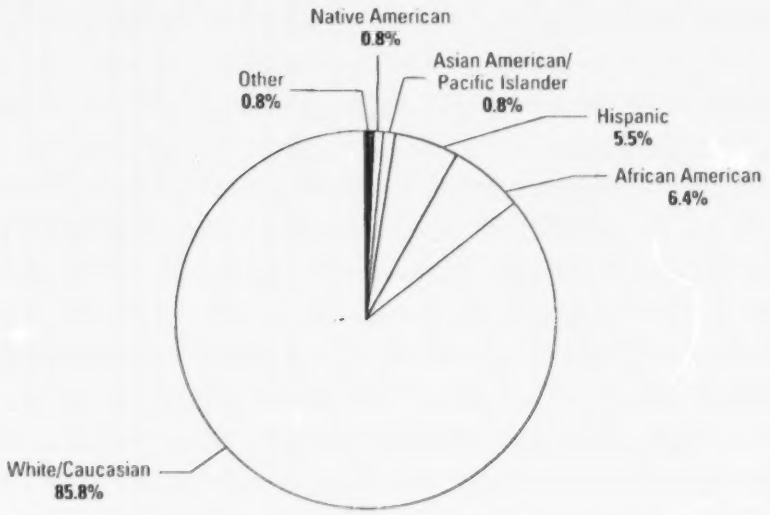


FIGURE 3 **Distribution of Presidents by Race or Ethnicity: 2001**



Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 because of rounding.

Female presidents were younger than their male counterparts; female presidents' average age was 54 years and male presidents' nearly 57. At an average age of just under 55 years, presidents in racial or ethnic categories other than White/Caucasian were slightly younger than their White/Caucasian counterparts, whose average age was almost 56 years.

Educational Background

Survey respondents answered questions about their highest degree earned, major field of study in pursuit of their highest degree, and history as community college students.

The educational level of community college presidents appears to have changed little between 1996 and 2001. The 1996 CLS showed that approximately 89 percent of the presidents held a doctorate; that figure declined slightly, to about 88 percent, in 2001. By contrast, in 1984 approximately 76 percent of presidents reported that they held a doctorate. Figure 4 shows the distribution of the 2001 CLS respondents by highest degree attained.

As in 1996, approximately 72 percent of the community college presidents surveyed in 2001 reported obtaining their highest degree in some area of education.

Both the number of presidents who had attended a community college and the number who had earned an associate degree changed little between 1991 and 2001. As in 1991 and 1996, in 2001, approximately 40 percent of the survey respondents said they had attended a community college. Slightly more of the 2001 CLS respondents had earned an associate degree, with the percentage increasing from about 16 percent in 1991 and again in 1996 to approximately 19 percent in 2001.

Professional Background

The presidents provided data on the number of years they had occupied their current position, the total number of years they had served as a community college president, the number of presidencies they had held, their position prior to their first presidency, whether they had been an internal candidate for their first presidency, and whether they had been a community college president when they accepted their current position.

The average number of years the presidents had held their current position was 7.3 years, a

FIGURE 4 **Presidents' Highest Degree Attained: 2001**

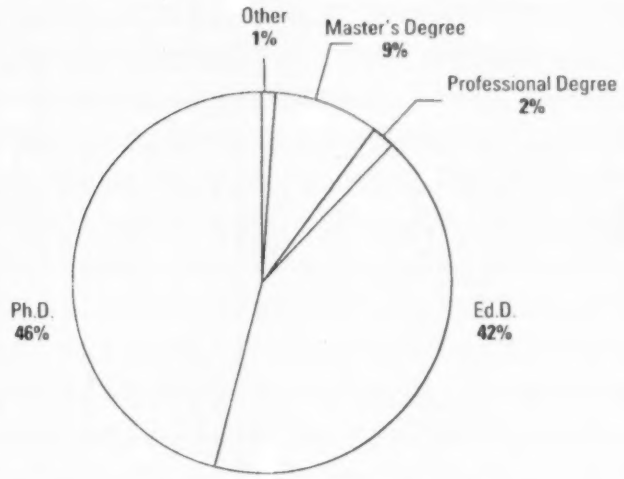


FIGURE 5 **Years in Current Position: 2001**

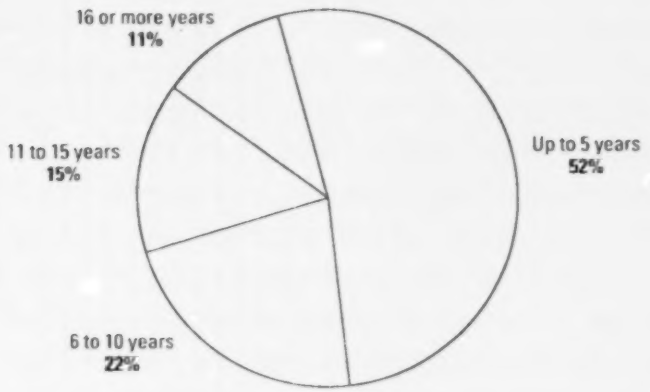


figure that has changed little since 1984. More than half (about 53 percent) of the 2001 respondents had been in their current position five years or less. About 21 percent of the presidents had been in their current position one year or less (Figure 5).

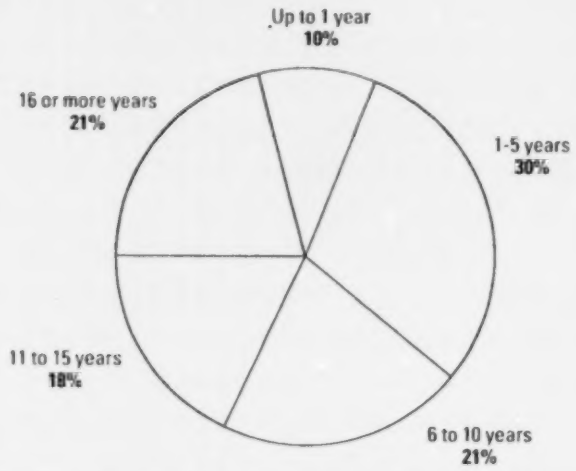
The average length of time respondents had served as community college presidents was nearly 10 years, practically the same tenure indicated in 1996.

The percentage of new presidents did not change between 1996 and 2001. In both years, 10 percent of the respondents reported a presidential tenure of one year or less and 17 percent a tenure of two years or less. Figure 6 depicts the time-in-tenure distribution of the 2001 survey respondents.

The majority of the 2001 respondents (nearly 70 percent) were in their first presidency. About another 22 percent were in their second presidency. The rest had held either three presidencies (about 6 percent), four presidencies (almost 2 percent), or five presidencies (less than 1 percent).

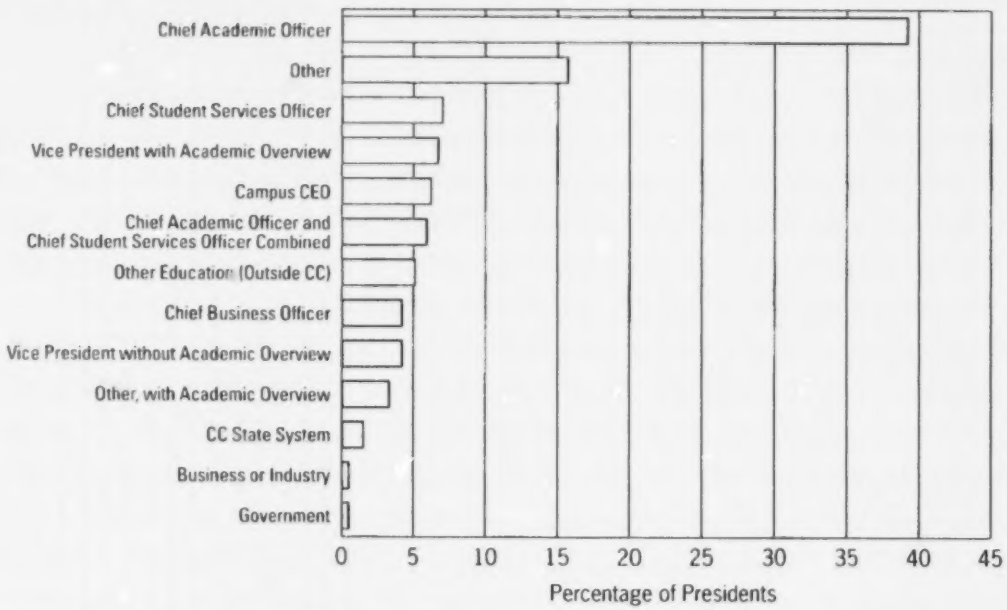
Since 1984, the most common pathway to the presidency has been through academic administrative positions. Consistent with this trend, the 2001 CLS showed that about 55 percent of the presidents had served in academic administration prior to their first presidency. More than 39 percent of the presidents had been chief academic officers; almost 7 percent had been vice presidents with academic overview; nearly 6 percent had held the dual position of chief academic officer and chief student services officer; slightly more than 3 percent had held other positions with academic overview. The most common nonacademic community college positions held prior to the first presidency were chief student services officer (7 percent), campus CEO (about 6 percent), and chief business officer (about 4 percent). Figure 7 lists the 2001 survey respondents' most commonly held positions prior to their first presidency.

FIGURE 6 **Presidential Tenure: 2001**



40 percent of respondents had held a CEO position for five years or less.

FIGURE 7 **Position Held Prior to First Presidency: 2001**



About one-third of the presidents (almost 34 percent) said they had been an internal candidate for their first presidential position. More than one-quarter (about 27 percent) stated that they had moved into their current position from another presidency. This percentage stayed fairly constant between 1991 and 2001.

Lifestyle

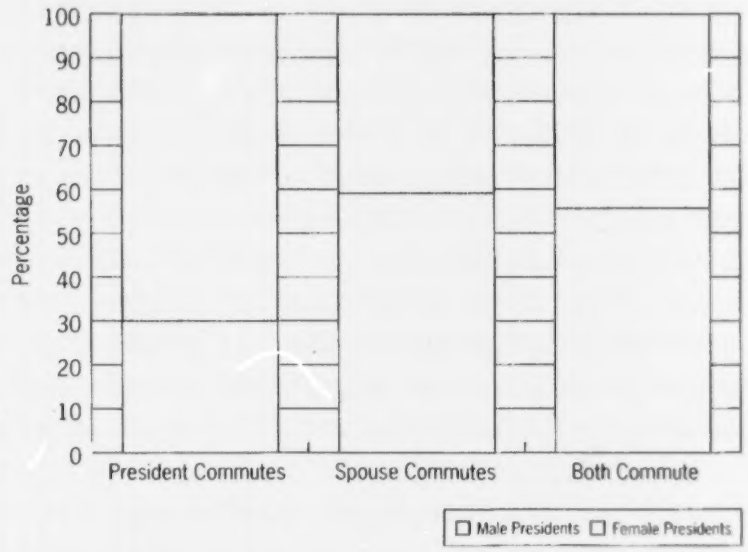
The CLS includes questions on commuter marriages, membership in and use of a country club, presidents' participation in sports, and their participation in cultural and entertainment activities. Information in this research brief is limited to data about presidents in commuter marriages.

Among 1996 survey respondents, nearly 6 percent said they had a commuter marriage. The 2001 CLS showed an increase in the percentage of commuter marriages to almost 10 percent. The majority (60 percent) of the presidents in commuter marriages are male.

Of those presidents in a commuter marriage, approximately 39 percent (27 percent male and 12 percent female) said they were the commuter. Slightly more than 43 percent of the presidents stated that their spouses commuted, and in nearly 18 percent of the marriages both the president and the spouse commuted.

Figure 8 compares the commuting responsibilities for male and female presidents.

FIGURE 8 **Presidents in Commuter Marriages, by Gender: 2001**



Profile of the Presidency

Professional Activities

The survey participants answered a variety of questions about their work activities, their plans for future employment, and their perceptions of the presidency.

The presidents were asked to estimate the percentage of their work time spent in each of 10 activity categories. These categories are not mutually exclusive and the responses represent the presidents' perceptions rather than objective observations, so readers should regard the data as informative rather than predictive. Even so, three general findings provide particular insight into the professional activities of community college presidents: About 56 percent of their time is devoted to internal activities such as administrative tasks, about 31 percent of presidents' time focuses on external relations, and about 13 percent of their time is spent on professional development and other activities. (Table 1, based on 570 survey responses, provides more detailed information on these general findings.)

TABLE 1 **Percentage of Time Spent on Presidential Tasks: 2001**

Internal Activities	**Time Reported (56.3%)**
Administrative Tasks	22.0%
College Meetings	21.8%
Informal Meetings & Interactions	12.5%
External Relations	**Time Reported (30.9%)**
Community Activities	12.7%
Fundraising Activities	9.5%
Legislative Activities	8.7%
Professional Development and Other Activities	**Time Reported (12.9%)**
Professional Meetings	6.4%
Professional Reading	4.7%
Other	1.2%
Teaching	0.6%

On average, teaching takes up less than 1 percent of presidents' time (Table 1). In fact, only about 9 percent of the 2001 survey respondents indicated that they taught in a community college at least once per year, a sizable decline from the approximately 14 percent who said they did so in 1996.

Nevertheless, presidents evidently do have experience in the community college classroom, even if it is not necessarily recent. Approximately 45 percent of the 2001 survey respondents stated that they had once taught full-time in a community college. This percentage had not changed substantially since 1991. However, the percentage of presidents reporting that they had taught part-time fluctuated dramatically over that period. In the 1991 CLS, approximately 63 percent of the presidents reported that they had taught at the community college level on a part-time basis at some stage of their career, but in 1996 that percentage dropped to about 41 percent. In 2001, however, almost 53 percent of the presidents said they had taught at the community college level on a part-time basis.

In 2001, for the first time in the CLS, presidents were asked whether they had a formal mentoring relationship with a potential future community college leader; approximately half of the presidents indicated that they had.

Presidents were also asked whether they were considering leaving their current position and, if so, the kind of position they would next pursue. Nearly 40 percent of the presidents indicated that there was a possibility they would seek or accept another

full-time position within the next five years. Approximately 16 percent said it was very likely they would move on, and almost 23 percent said it was somewhat likely. Of those who would seek another position within the next five years, a large majority (about 73 percent) said they would prefer to move on to another community college presidency. The next most popular positions of interest were the chancellorship of a state community college system (almost 8 percent) and positions in the private sector (slightly more than 4 percent).

Presidents were fairly evenly divided in terms of when they planned to retire, with the most common time frame being 7 to10 years (about 28 percent) and the least common being more than 10 years (about 21 percent) (Figure 9).

The rate of presidential retirement appears to be on the rise. Among the 1996 CLS respondents, approximately 68 percent said they planned to retire within 10 years of the date they completed the survey; in 2001, this percentage increased to about 79 percent. Conversely, the percentage of presidents who planned to retire more than 10 years from the date of the survey decreased from about 32 percent in 1996 to approximately 21 percent in 2001.

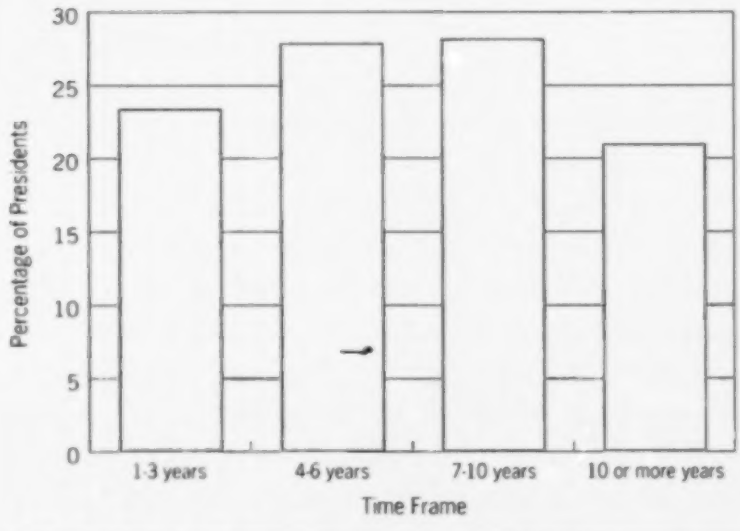
Terms of Employment

In the section of the survey dealing with employment conditions, respondents placed their employment contract into one of four categories: (1) rolling contract (49 percent); (2) fixed contract (40 percent); (3) no contract (9 percent); (4) some other form of contract (3 percent).

The percentage of presidents with a rolling contract increased from approximately 44 percent in 1996 to nearly 49 percent in 2001. The percentage of presidents with a fixed contract was almost unchanged since 1996.

The average presidential employment contract was for slightly less than three years, with more than 80 percent of the presidents having contracts of this duration.

FIGURE 9 **Estimated Years Until Retirement: 2001**



Unlike the presidents of many four-year colleges or universities, the majority of community college presidents (65 percent) neither live in college-owned housing nor receive a housing allowance, according to the 2001 CLS. Eight percent of the community college presidents said they lived in college-owned housing. Another 27 percent said they received a housing allowance.

The percentage of presidents living in college-owned housing declined by approximately two percentage points from 1991 to 2001. The percentage of presidents receiving a housing allowance increased from approximately 15 percent in 1996 to the 27 percent reported in the 2001 survey.

On the 2001 CLS, community college presidents reported earning an average of 22 days of annual leave (vacation time) each year. The number of days earned had remained almost constant since 1984. However, the 2001 survey respondents reported taking an average of only 13 days of leave in the previous year. Furthermore, approximately 77 percent of the presidents said they performed work associated with the college while on vacation. Only about 7 percent of the presidents reported being paid for their unused vacation time.

TABLE 2 **Board Evaluation of Presidents**

	n=477
A written report was issued following the evaluation.	76%
The evaluation by the board affected your compensation package.	54%
A presidential self-assessment was part of the evaluation process.	64%

Presidential Evaluation

A new set of questions on the 2001 survey dealt with presidential evaluation. Nearly three-quarters of the presidents said the governing board of their community college performed a formal presidential evaluation each year. Table 2 provides further information from the 477 presidents who reported that their governing board gave them an annual formal evaluation.

Another group of questions added to the 2001 survey dealt with what might be described as presidential crises—votes of no confidence and dismissals. Approximately 30 presidents (almost 5 percent) reported that they had received a vote of no confidence from the faculty. Fifteen (about 2 percent) said they had been dismissed from the presidency at some time in their career. Only three presidents (or less than half of 1 percent) reported both receiving a faculty vote of no confidence and being dismissed from the presidency. (It is unknown whether, in any of these cases, the vote and the dismissal concerned the same presidency.)

Community and Business Relations

The 2001 survey added questions on board membership; meetings with high-ranking business and industry officials, elementary and secondary school officials, and government officials; and community service or volunteer work.

Approximately 50 percent of the presidents said they served on the boards of corporations or other commercial enterprises. Nearly 15 percent said they served on a corporate board for business and industry and were paid for their service. Almost 35 percent said they served on a corporate board without pay.

The presidents were also asked if they served on the board of a community-based or nonprofit organization and whether they received pay for their service. An overwhelming majority (about 93 percent) of the presidents said they served on boards of nonprofit or community-based organizations without

pay . Slightly more than 2 percent said they were paid for their service on a nonprofit organization's board. Only 5 percent of all presidents stated that they do not serve on the board of a community-based or nonprofit organization. Figure 10 shows the distribution of presidents serving on different types of profit and nonprofit boards.

The presidents were asked how often they met with high-ranking officials of business and industry. Eleven percent of the presidents said they met with top business and industry leaders at least five times per week. Another 58 percent said they met with such leaders at least once a week, and approximately 27 percent said they met with these leaders at least once a month (Figure 11).

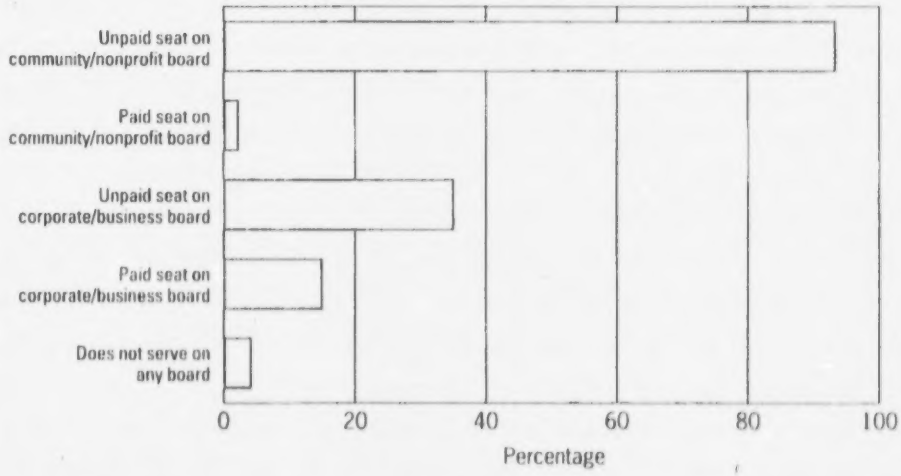
The respondents to the 2001 CLS also reported meeting with officials of local primary, middle, and secondary schools, but with less frequency than they met with high-ranking officials of business and industry. Less than 1 percent of the presidents said they met with school officials at least five times a week. About 19 percent said they met with these officials at least once a week; about 56 percent said they met with such officials at least once a month. The remainder (about 24 percent) said their meetings with local school officials occurred less than once per month.

For the first time on the CLS, presidents were asked if they had performed community service or volunteer work during the past year. A large majority—nearly 84 percent—said they had done so during the past year. Almost 24 percent said they worked with children. Nearly 11 percent reported working with seniors, and more than 16 percent said they worked on neighborhood improvement projects. Thirteen percent reported working at social service agencies.

A majority of the presidents (about 57 percent) said they helped to raise funds for nonpolitical purposes that were not related to their community college. Almost 17 percent of the presidents raised funds for—and more than 9 percent volunteered for—political campaigns. Figure 12 shows the presidents' participation in community service or other forms of volunteer work.

The responses to CLS 2001 indicate that community college presidents see value in establishing and maintaining relationships with state and federal officials. Nearly all respondents to CLS 2001 (92

FIGURE 10 **External Board Membership: 2001**

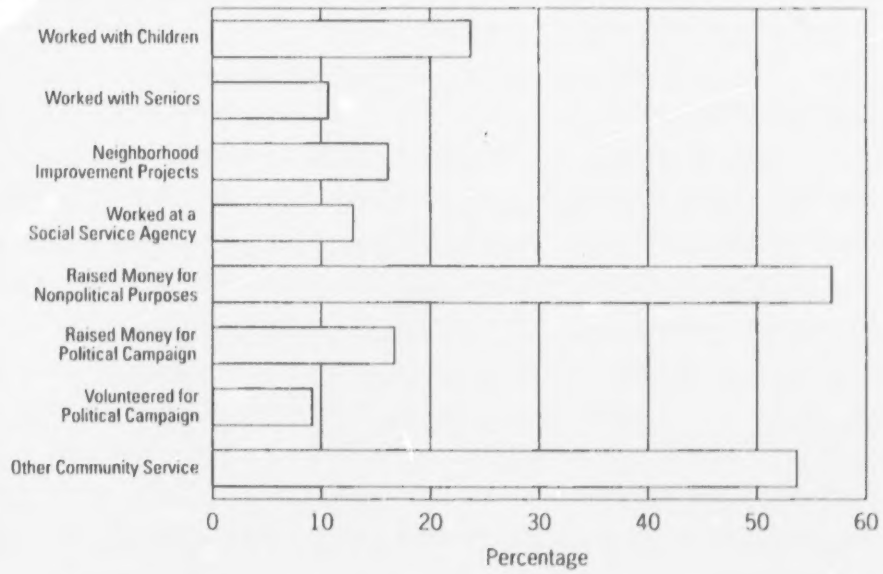


percent) said they had visited legislators during their state's last legislative session for the purpose of promoting the interests of their community college. More than half (about 52 percent) of the presidents said they spoke with the state representative for their community college's district more than 10 times per year, and about 48 percent reported having conversations with the state senator representing their college's district more than 10 times per year. Approximately 45 percent of the presidents said they spoke with their college's state representative 2 to 10 times per year; almost 49 percent

FIGURE 11 **Contacts with Business and Industry Officials: 2001**

69 percent of responding presidents met with business and industry officials at least once a week.

FIGURE 12 **Community Service or Volunteer Work: 2001**



reported speaking with their college's state senator 2 to 10 times per year.

Presidents also maintained contact with the governor's office in their state. More than 53 percent of the presidents said they spoke with the governor's office 2 to 10 times per year, and more than 8 percent reported having conversations with their governor's office more than 10 times yearly.

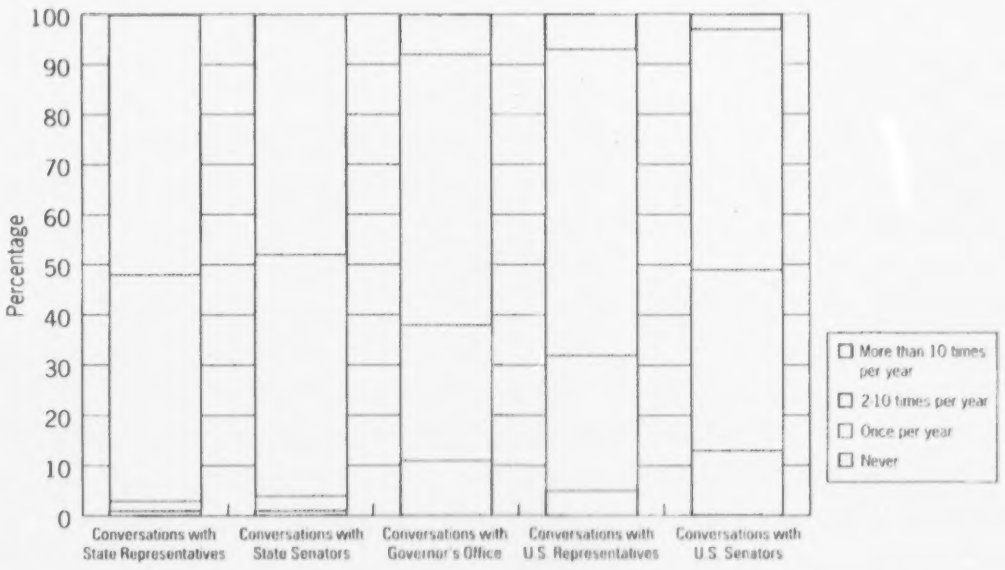
The survey respondents also reported that they kept in touch with elected officials representing their college's congressional district. The majority of presidents (61 percent) reported having conversations with their college's member of the U.S. House of Representatives 2 to 10 times per year, and slightly less than half (about 48 percent) had conversations with their U.S. senator 2 to 10 times yearly.

Figure 13 shows the responses of presidents regarding the frequency of their conversations with governors and state and federal legislators.

Concluding Remarks

The data in this research brief depict a general portrait of the community college presidency and the individuals who occupy this position. One of the most important characteristics of the presidency revealed through the 2001 CLS is the strong emphasis on external relations. In addition to leading their institutions internally, community college presidents are called upon to be leaders in their communities, including working with leaders of business and industry, leaders in other sectors of education, and representatives from various government agencies. Almost all of today's community college presidents serve on nonprofit or community boards; on the average, they interact with a variety of public officials and business and community leaders at least once per month. They perform presidential tasks in the evenings, on weekends, and while on vacation.

FIGURE 13 **Conversations with Government Officials: 2001**



As competition within higher education increases and funding decreases, community college presidents face challenges never imagined by the early incumbents of the position. In addition, changing student demographics, a lack of academic preparedness, globalization of the economy, and rapidly changing technologies place untold demands on presidents for leadership skills to navigate new and often uncharted waters.

Societal and professional changes shape the responsibilities, expectations, and complexities of the presidency. Although the forces shaping the presidency are strong, ultimately presidents themselves are responsible for shaping their presidency in ways that meet the demands of the times. We believe the 2001 CLS demographic data on current community college presidents have important implications, particularly when one considers the growing number of presidential vacancies.

As shown in Figure 1 (page 1), the percentage of community college presidents who planned to stay in the presidency for an additional 10 years decreased from 32 percent in 1996 to 21 percent in 2001. In other words, within a five-year period, the percentage of presidents who planned to retire within the subsequent 10 years increased by 11 percent. As presidents and community college governing boards prepare to fill these anticipated vacancies, gender and racial or ethnic representation among community college presidents should be considered, especially in light of the percentage of minorities currently occupying the community college presidency.

Perhaps the most encouraging finding of the 2001 CLS is the increase in female community college presidents. As the survey indicates, the percentage of female presidents rose from almost 11 percent in 1991 to nearly 28 percent in 2001. This increase more than doubled the percentage of female presidents in a 10-year period.

We believe the most discouraging statistic is one that indicates stasis rather than change: the representation of ethnic or racial minorities in the presidency. In 1991, approximately 11 percent of the community college presidents identified themselves as members of an ethnic or racial minority. In 1996, that segment had increased about three percentage points, to slightly more than 14 percent. There has been no increase in minority representation since 1996.

In the 1996 CLS interviews, community college presidents stated that a major challenge to increasing diversity in the presidency is the relatively small number of qualified minority individuals who are interested in the presidency. Presidents have the opportunity to provide mentorship and leadership experience to minorities interested in entering the presidential pipeline. According to the 2001 CLS, approximately 50 percent of the presidents do, in fact, have a formal mentoring relationship with a potential future community college leader.

Other community college leaders, university leaders, and leaders of professional associations can also help expand the pool of qualified minority presidential candidates by providing opportunities for these individuals to earn graduate degrees, participate in professional development training, and engage in formal mentoring experiences.

Community college leaders pride themselves on their commitment to American democracy and to serving their communities. The commitment to these ideals could be demonstrated through the recruitment, selection, and retention of community college presidents who reflect the nation's racial and ethnic diversity. Although some of the initiatives suggested above are under way, the 2001 data reveal that these efforts have not yet resulted in a more balanced representation of minority groups in the community college presidency. Community colleges should work toward that balance in order to fulfill their potential as a major avenue for diversity among the nation's colleges and universities.

Previous Career and Lifestyle Surveys: Published Results

Vaughan, George B. 1986. *The Community College Presidency*. New York: American Council on Education/Macmillan.

Vaughan, George B., Gustavo A. Mellander, and Beverly Blois. 1994. *The Community College Presidency: Current Status and Future Outlook*. Washington, D.C.: Community College Press, American Association of Community Colleges.

Vaughan, George B., and Iris M. Weisman. 1998. *The Community College Presidency at the Millennium*. Washington, D.C.: Community College Press, American Association of Community Colleges.

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